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*Xenophon's Account of the Fall of Nineveh.*—By PAUL  
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XENOPHON relates in his *Anabasis* (3, 4, 7) that when after the battle of Cunaxa (between the Euphrates and the Tigris, probably 75 miles NW. of Babylon) the Greeks moved along the Tigris, they came (about the end of the year 401 B. C.) to a large city in ruins, which was called *Larissa*.<sup>1</sup> It had formerly been inhabited by the Medes. The wall was 25 feet wide, and 100 feet high; the circumference was two parasangs, *i. e.* about seven miles. It was built of bricks; κρηπίς δ' ὑπὲν λιθίνῃ τὸ ὕψος εἴκοσι ποδῶν, under it was a stone κρηπίς (see below) 20 feet high.<sup>2</sup> At the time when the Persians deprived the Medes of their dominions, the King of the Persians besieged the city, but was unable to capture it. Finally there appeared a cloud which veiled the sun so that the inhabitants left the city. Near this city was a stone pyramid,<sup>3</sup> one plethron wide, *i. e.* about 100 feet square, and two plethra high. Many barbarians had fled there from the neighboring villages.

From Larissa, they marched one day's journey (of six parasangs, *i. e.* about 20 miles) to a large ruined castle<sup>4</sup> near a city,

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<sup>1</sup> Xenophon no doubt means *Calah*, the present *Nimrūd*; but the name *Larissa* may be a corruption of *Resen*; see below.

<sup>2</sup> Or. *deep*; cf. Latin *altus*.

<sup>3</sup> That is, a temple-tower, Assy. *ziqqurratu*; see the cut on p. 187 of the translation of *Ezekiel*, in the Polychrome Bible. I have pointed out there that the temple-tower is, as it were, a huge altar, and that the Egyptian pyramids appear to be a subsequent modification of the primitive Babylonian temple-tower. The interior of the Solomonic Temple resembled, to a certain extent, a Babylonian temple-tower of three stories; see Crit. Notes on Kings (SBOT.), p. 86, l. 22; cf. KAT.<sup>3</sup>, 617, 3. The temple-tower of Nimrūd seems to have had five stories; cf. Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1900), p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> This is no doubt the Acropolis of Nineveh, now known as *Kouyunjik* (كويونجك). The distance between *Kouyunjik* and *Nimrūd* is about 20 miles. See the large map in the second volume of Freiherr von Oppenheim's work (cited above) and the smaller map facing p. 182; also the maps in Col. Billerbeck's article, BA. 3.

called *Mespila*, which was formerly inhabited by Medes. The κρηπίς<sup>1</sup> was of polished shell-limestone, 50 feet wide and 50 feet high. Over it (ἐπὶ δὲ ταύτῃ)<sup>2</sup> there was a brick wall 50 feet wide and 100 feet high. The circumference was about six parasangs, *i. e.* about 20 miles.<sup>3</sup> The queen of the King of the Medes is said to have fled there<sup>4</sup> when the Medes were deprived of their dominion by the Persians. The King of the Persians besieged the place,<sup>5</sup> but could not capture it,<sup>5</sup> either by time (χρόνῳ) *i. e.* a long siege, or by force (assault). Finally Zeus terrified the inhabitants by a thunder storm,<sup>6</sup> and thus the city<sup>5</sup> was captured.

This account is somewhat inaccurate; but it is still possible to discern the historical nucleus. In the first place, we must substitute *Assyrians* for *Medes*, and *Medes* for *Persians*. The city was inhabited by the *Assyrians*, and it was captured by the *Medes*. The names *Medes*, *Persians*, *Assyrians*, *Babylonians*, are often confounded. Herodotus (I, 178) calls Babylon the capital of Assyria; *cf.* also 3, 92 (I, 185; 4, 39) and Xenophon's *Cyropædia* 2, 1, 5. At the beginning of the Book of Judith,<sup>7</sup> we read that Nebuchadnezzar was *King of Assyria in Nineveh*. In the Ethiopic Version<sup>8</sup> of the pseudepigraphic book known as *The Rest of the Words of Baruch*, Nebuchadnezzar is called *negūša Fārēs*, the king of Persia; and at the beginning of the sixth chapter of the Book of Daniel we read

<sup>1</sup> Of Mespila.

<sup>2</sup> This may mean also *behind it*; *cf.* οἱ ἐπὶ πᾶσι=those who bring up the rear; οἱ ἐπὶ τοῖς=those who follow.

<sup>3</sup> According to Bædeker, *Palästina und Syrien* (Leipzig, 1904), p. 361, it takes about four or five hours to go around the wall of Nineveh.

<sup>4</sup> Xenophon, it may be supposed, means the castle, *i. e.* the Acropolis (*Kouyunjik*).

<sup>5</sup> Nineveh.

<sup>6</sup> *Cf.* the Maccabean alphabetical psalm prefixed to the Book of Nahum in which an Israelitish poet (about 606 B.C.) describes the fall of Nineveh; see my paper *Eine alttestamentliche Festliturgie für den Nikanortag* in ZDMG. 61, and my translation of the Book of Nahum in JBL. 26.

<sup>7</sup> The Book of Judith is a Palestinian, Pharisaic festal legend for the Feast of Purim; see Haupt, *Purim* (Leipzig, 1906), p. 7, l. 33.

<sup>8</sup> See Dillmann's *Chrestomathia Aethiopica*, p. 6, l. 12; *cf.* JAOS. 22, 74, n. 2.

that when the last king of the Chaldeans, Belshazzar,<sup>1</sup> was slain he was succeeded by *Darius the Mede*. This statement is due to a confusion of the destruction of Nineveh in 606 and the overthrow of Babylon at the hands of Cyrus in 538, with the conquest of Babylon under Darius Hystaspes in 520.<sup>2</sup> In the Maccabean sections of the Prophets of the Old Testament *Babel* often stands for *Nineveh* representing Assyria=Syria, i. e. the Seleucidan Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

Diodorus of Sicily says that there was an old oracle stating that no one would be able to capture Nineveh, unless the river should turn against the city.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting that Xenophon ascribes the fall of Nineveh to a cataclysm,<sup>5</sup> and that he refers especially to the queen of the besieged King. The prophet Nahum says in his poetic description of the fall of Nineveh:

The gates of the river are open,  
the palace is tottering ;  
A lake of water is Nineveh,  
the flood overwhelms her.

Brought out, a captive, deported  
is the King's fair consort ;  
Like doves her maidens moaning  
and beating their breasts.

See my translation of the Book of Nahum in ZDMG. 61, and JBL. 26.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Belshazzar was not the last king of Babylon, but the son of the last king, Nabonidus (555-538). According to the Book of Daniel, Belshazzar was the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar (604-561). But Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by Evil-merodach, 561/0, Neriglissar, 559-6, and Labashi-Marduk, 556/5.

<sup>2</sup> See Crit. Notes on Daniel (SBOT.), p. 29, l. 15 ; cf. the confusion of *Abimelech* and *Achish* in the title of Ps. 34.

<sup>3</sup> See note 17 to my paper in ZDMG. 61, cited above, p. 100, n. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Diod. 21, 26, 9 : ἦν δὲ αὐτῶς λόγιον παραδεδομένον ἐκ προγόνων ὅτι τὴν Νίνον οὐδεὶς ἐλεῖ κατὰ κράτος, ἐὰν μὴ πρότερον ὁ ποταμὸς τῇ πόλει γένηται πολέμιος.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Diod. 2, 27 : τῶ τρίτῃ δ' ἔτει συνεχῶς ὁμβρων μεγάλων καταρραγέντων συνέβη τὸν Εὐφράτην μέγαν γενόμενον κατακλύσαι τε μέρος τῆς πόλεως καὶ καταβαλεῖν τὸ τεῖχος ἐπὶ σταδίων εἰκοσιν. *Euphrates* is a mistake for *Khôsar*.

<sup>6</sup> Note the following abbreviations : AJSL.=*American Journal of Semitic Languages* ; BA.=Delitzsch and Haupt, *Beiträge zur Assyriologie* ; HW.=Delitzsch, *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch* ; JAOS.=*Journal of the American Oriental Society* ; JBL.=*Journal of Biblical Literature* ; JHUC.=*Johns Hopkins University Circulars* ; KAT.=E. Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament* ; KB.=E.

Xenophon does not mention the name *Nineveh*. He only names *Larissa* and *Mespila*. Λάρισσα has been explained by Nöldeke as a corruption of the Biblical *Resen*, which was situated between Calah and Nineveh. *Larissa* stands for *Narissa*, with *l* for *n*,<sup>1</sup> and this is a transposition for *Rassina*, Assy. *Rēš-īni*, afterwards pronounced *Risīn*.<sup>2</sup> The name *Larissa* may be a Greek adaptation of the Assy. *Risīn*, the Biblical *Resen*, but Xenophon undoubtedly referred to *Calah*, not to *Resen*; so it is a confusion of names, just as he says *Medes* instead of *Assyrians*, and *Persians* instead of *Medes*, and as Diodorus confuses the *Euphrates* with the *Tigris*, and the *Tigris* with the *Khōsar*.<sup>3</sup>

As to Μέπιλα, it is often said to be an Assyrian word, *mušpīlu*, destroyed; but Assy. *mušpīlu* is active, not passive; it means *subduer* not *subdued* or *destroyed*. The passive would be *muštepēlu*. Besides, *šupēlu* (the causative of the intensive stem *ba'al*, from which the word *belu*, lord, is derived) does not mean *to destroy*, but *to subdue* or *suppress*. The *p* in *mušpēlu* represents a partial assimilation of the *b* to the preceding causative *š*, as in *dīšpu*, honey, for *dīšbu*, in Hebrew transposed: *dēvāš*. According to Schrader (KAT.<sup>2</sup> 99, below), and Sayce (in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 553, below), Μέπιλα is the Assy. *mušpalu* = *dépression de terrain*, low ground; but this explanation is not satisfactory. I believe that *Mespila* represents an Assyrian noun *mušpīlu* derived from the word *pīlu* or *pīlu*, which has passed into Greek as *πῶρος*. Greek *πῶρος* denotes a tufaceous limestone resembling marble. Medical writers use the term *πῶρος* for the new growth of osseous tissue between and around the extremities of fractured bones, which we call *callus*. Assy. *pīlu* (or *pīlu*) does not

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Schrader, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*; MDOG. = *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*; PSBA. = *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*; SBOT. = Haupt, *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament*; ZDMG. = *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*. Cf. below, p. 112, n. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Assy. *nešu*, lion, appears in Hebrew as *laiš*; beside Heb. *liškā*, cell, we find also *niškā*; see AJSL. 21, 142, n. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Haupt, *The pronunciation of tr in Old Persian*, JHUC. No. 59, p. 118; *The Assyrian E-vowel*, pp. 4, 23.

<sup>3</sup> See n. 94 to my paper in ZDMG. 61, cited above, p. 100, n. 6.

mean *granite*, or *marble*, or *alabaster*, but *shell-limestone*.<sup>1</sup> Assyr. *mušpīlu*<sup>2</sup> may mean a *place producing shell-limestone*, or a *place where shell-limestone is found*,<sup>3</sup> a designation like the modern Arabic name of Ur of the Chaldees, *Al-Muqāḍiār*, asphalted, *i. e.* built with asphalt mortar.

Xenophon says, the *κρηπίς* of Mespila (*i. e.* Nineveh) consisted of shell-limestone (*λίθος κογχυλιάτης*). This passage has been universally misunderstood. *Κρηπίς* is generally supposed to refer to the base (or plinth) of the wall, but it means also (like Lat. *crepida* in the proverb *ne sutor supra crepidam*) sole, shoe, and (like Lat. *crepido*) embankment, quay, revetment, retaining wall (Assyr. *kāru*, HW. 349<sup>b</sup>), especially the *facing* or *lining* of a foss or canal or reservoir *with masonry*. The meaning *quay*, *embankment*, is evident in Polyb. 5, 37, 8.

In Polyb. 8, 5, 2 *κρηπίς* denotes the *revetment* (facing of stone) *of the sea-wall*<sup>5</sup> on the eastern side of Syracuse. Polybius says that when the Romans besieged Syracuse (213 B.C.) the commander of the fleet, Appius Claudius (Pulcher) decided to attack the (eastern) part of the city known as *Achradina*, at the so-called Scythian stoa where the wall along the sea-shore was built directly on the embankment, *i. e.* the revetment of the sea-wall, so that there was no foreshore affording a landing-place, in front of the wall. The Roman ships were therefore obliged to approach close to the wall, and the scaling-ladders (*sambukes*) were placed on two ships lashed together, not on the berm in front of the wall. The Roman commander supposed the people of Syracuse, considering this place impregna-

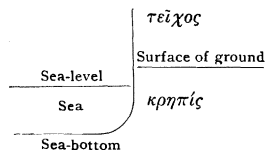
<sup>1</sup> Cf. my paper on the cuneiform name of the cachalot, *AJSL*. 23, 259, below, and *MDOG.*, No. 26, pp. 35, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Assyr. *mušpīlu* or *mušpēlu* is a form like *muškēnu*, humble, which appears in Hebrew as *miskén*, and in French as *mesquin*, mean; see *AJSL*. 23, 226, n. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the so-called *nomina abundantiae vel multitudinis* in Arabic, e. g. *mārmana*, a place where pomegranates (Arab. *rumḡān*) grow abundantly.

<sup>4</sup> Not *ultra*! See Plin. *Nat. hist.* 35, 85.

<sup>5</sup> See the cuts of sea-walls in the *Century Dictionary*, p. 5450, especially cut B. The *facing of stone* (c) is the *κρηπίς*, and the upper perpendicular continuation of the curved *κρηπίς* is the *τείχος*.



ble, would perhaps not station a strong force there, so that they might be overpowered by a *coup de main*.

In Herod. I, 185, 20 κρηπὶς denotes the embankment of the artificial lake which Queen Nitocris (*i. e.* King Nebuchadnezzar)<sup>1</sup> built below Babylon; κρηπὶς means here especially the revetment of the walls of the basin with asphalt and burned bricks (Assyr. *ina kupri u agurri*). The Babylonian term for *embankment* is *kibru*, a retaining wall is called *kāru*; see HW. 315<sup>b</sup>, 349<sup>b</sup>. *Kāru* is connected with *qīr* (KAT.<sup>2</sup> 516), pitch (originally *bitumen*),<sup>2</sup> which appears in Greek as κηρός, and *kibru* is the Babylonian<sup>3</sup> form of *kipru*, which is a byform of *kupru*, asphalt. Κρηπὶς may be a Greek adaptation of Assyr. *kipru*, *kipir* or *kiper*,<sup>4</sup> with transposition of *r* and *i*: *kiper*, *kirep*, *krepi*; cf. Arab. *fiṣṣ*=ψήφος; see Haupt, *Purim* (Leipzig, 1906), p. 45, l. 11 (*fiṣṣ*=ψῖφ, *tsif*, *tsef*, *psef*).

In Herod. 2, 170 κρηπὶς is used for the embankment of the sacred lake at the temple of the goddess Neith, the chief deity of Sais.

The best translation of the cuneiform prototype of κρηπὶς, *kipru* (*kibru*) is *embankment*, while *kāru* denotes a *retaining wall*.<sup>5</sup>

In German, the bottom of a ditch is called *die Sohle des Grabens*. In French, *escarpe* means *slope* in the sense of an inclined bank of earth on the side of a cutting or embankment, especially (like our *scarp*) the interior *talus* or slope of the ditch of a fortress. *Escarpment*, French *escarpement*, denotes a sharp, steep slope or the precipitous side of a hill or rock,

<sup>1</sup> Nebuchadnezzar says that he surrounded the district of Babylon with great waters like unto the sea, *me rabi'ûtim kîma gîbiš tî'âmâti mâta ušalmî-ma*; see Neb. 6, 41-52; Neb. Grot. 2, 10-14; cf. KB. 3, 2, pp. 22 and 34; PSBA. 10, 115, 222; BA. 3, 532, 546; also R. W. Rogers, *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, vol. 2 (New York, 1900), p. 395, and HW. 10<sup>b</sup>, below.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *qīr*, wall means originally *built with bitumen*; cf. *Al-Muqāḥḥar* and *igaru*=*agurru* (HW. 18, 19). Assyr. *kīru*, *kāru*=Sumer. *gir*.

<sup>3</sup> See Haupt, *Beiträge zur assyr. Lautlehre* (Göttingen, 1883), p. 102, n. 3; Delitzsch, *Assyr. Gr.*<sup>2</sup>, § 25, c.

<sup>4</sup> See Haupt, *The Assyr. E-vowel* (Baltimore, 1887), p. 23; Delitzsch, *Assyr. Gr.*<sup>2</sup>, § 44.

<sup>5</sup> See MDOG., No. 22, pp. 35, 55; No. 25, p. 59; especially the pictures in No. 26, pp. 24, 38, 48; cf. also *ibid.* p. 36.

while French *escarpin* means *shoe*,<sup>1</sup> especially *pumps*,<sup>2</sup> just as Greek *κρηπίς* and Lat. *crepida* mean *shoe*. In Latin we have also *carpisculum*, which denotes a kind of shoe, and the architectural term *carpusculum*, foundation, base. *Talus*, slope, means originally *heel*, *ankle*. Ital. *scarpa* (French *escarpe*) may be an adaptation of *crepido*=*κρηπίς*, connecting it with *scarpellare*, to cut, hew, dig. French *escarpe* is generally supposed to be a Germanic word. Beside MHG. *scharf*, *scharpf* and OHG. *scarf*, *scarpf* we find also *sarf*.

It is not impossible that *pump*, low shoe or slipper, is connected with *pump* (for pumping water). In certain parts of Germany the term *Plumpe* is used instead of *Pumpe*, and *plumpen* or *plumpsen* means, like our *plump*, to fall like a stone in the water, *i. e.* to the bottom. A *Pumpstiefel* means in German a large, clumsy boat. The derivation of *pump*=slipper, from *pomp* is unsatisfactory. *Plump* and *pump* are onomatopoeic, just as *plap*, *plop*, *plash*, *splash*, German *platschen*, *platzen*, *patschen*. The original meaning of *pump* may be to *plump* to the bottom, and *pump*=slipper, may mean originally (like *κρηπίς*=*crepida*) *bottom*, *sole*; while to *pump* water meant originally to *raise from the bottom*.<sup>3</sup> There is evidently some connection between to *plump* and Lat. *plumbum*, lead. To *plump* (just as to *plunge*) may mean originally to fall heavily to the bottom of a well like a piece of lead. A common expression in German for to *sink under the water*, to *go to the bottom* is to *swim like a leaden duck* (German *wie eine bleierne Ente*).<sup>4</sup> Cf. also *es liegt mir wie Blei in den Gliedern*, *bleierne Müdigkeit*, etc., and our *leaden-winged*, *leaden-paced*, etc. It is possible that Lat. *plumbum* is onomatopoeic; Greek *μόλυβδος* seems to be a loan word.

<sup>1</sup> In English we have *scarpines* as the name of the instrument of torture (resembling the Scotch iron boot) used by the Inquisition (in German: *Spanische Stiefel*).

<sup>2</sup> French *escarpin* is the Ital. *scarpino*; cf. also Ital. *scarpetta* and *scarpettina*. A large shoe is called *scarpone* or *scarpettone*. Ital. *scarpa* means both *shoe* and *slope*=French *escarpe*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the privative denominative verbs cited in my paper *The Etymology of Mohél, Circumciser*, *AJSL*. 22, 251.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ex. 15, 10; see my translation of Moses' Song of Triumph, *AJSL*. 20, 157.



In Xenophon's description of Mespila, *κρηπὶς* refers, not to the base of the city wall, but to the moat. The moat of Nineveh is still extant. It is cut in the shell-limestone rock with vertical walls; the width is 150 feet, the depth about 13 feet.<sup>1</sup> It has, of course, been gradually filled up; at the time of Xenophon (401 B.C.) the depth may well have been 50 feet. I believe therefore that Xenophon's statement (*Anabasis* 3, 4) ἦν δὲ ἡ μὲν κρηπὶς λίθου ξεστοῦ κογχυλιάτου τὸ εὖρος πεντήκοντα ποδῶν καὶ τὸ ὕψος πεντήκοντα should be translated: The bed of the ditch was of polished shell-limestone,<sup>2</sup> [1]50 feet wide, and 50 feet deep.<sup>3</sup> Instead of 50 feet wide we must read 150 feet wide. The 50 instead of 150 is due to the statement in the following paragraph where the width of the wall is given as 50 feet. The term *κρηπὶς* was misunderstood to refer to the base of the wall; therefore 150 was changed to 50.

The term *κρηπὶς*, Lat. *crepida*, sole, bottom, is also at the bottom of the adjective *decrepit*, broken down, especially by age. The original meaning is generally supposed to be *noiseless*, from *de* and *crepitus*, noise, because old people creep about quietly. I believe, however, that *decrepitus* is connected with *crepido*, slope, decline;<sup>4</sup> it means *declined*, i. e. *fallen off*, *sunk to a lower level*, *fallen into an inferior position*; in German: *heruntergekommen*.<sup>5</sup> We say of a patient suffering from a wasting disease: *he is in a decline*. Cf. also our figurative use of the phrase *to go down the hill*<sup>6</sup> and *to be taken down* with a fever, etc. The same idea underlies *crepusculum*, twilight, which is said to be a Sabine word. It means originally *declination*, *decline* of the sun, *sundown*. The use of *crepusculum* for the light of the morning from the first dawn to sunrise is secondary. The proper term for the light from the sky when the sun is below the horizon at morning is *diluculum*. Some philologists connect the adjective *creper*, dark, with *δνοφερός*,

<sup>1</sup> See BA. 3, 122.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. above, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Or *high*; the vertical walls of the moat (*scarp* and *counterscarp*) were 50 feet high.

<sup>4</sup> In Germany a great many people say *decrepide*, with *d*, instead of *decrepit*; also in English, *decrepit* is often spelled with *d*.

<sup>5</sup> Our phrase *run down* affords no parallel; this means originally *having its motive power exhausted* like a clock that has run down.

<sup>6</sup> See Haupt, *Ecclesiastes* (Baltimore, 1905), p. 45, l. 3.

dark, and κνέφας (for \*κονέφας, Sanskrit *kṣár*, night), darkness; but this is impossible. *Crepusculum*, twilight, and *decrepitus*, in a decline, must be connected with *crepida*, sole, bottom, slope, decline, and in Xenophon's account of the fall of Nineveh κρηπίς means, not the *base of the city wall*, but the *bed of the moat*. Greek κρηπίς, Lat. *crepido*, *crepida*, *decrepitus*, *crepusculum*, *carpisculum*, *carpusculum*; French *escarpe*, *escarpin*,<sup>1</sup> etc., are ultimately derived from the Assyrian *kipru* (Babylonian *kibru*), embankment, which is connected with the word for asphalt, *kupru*.<sup>2</sup> The root of this stem is *kap*, to rub, to smear, German *streichen*, *schmieren*, originally *to pass the hand* (Heb. *kaf*) over something; cf. my paper on the Semitic roots *qr*, *kr*, *xr* in *AJSL*. 23, 241–252 and my book *Biblische Liebeslieder* (Leipzig, 1907) pp. 127–132.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. also French *crépi*, *crépîr*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *MDOG.*, No. 12, p. 2; No. 22, p. 47; No. 27, p. 25.